

TRAFFORD & STOCKPORT COLLEGE GROUP

**Minutes of the Resources Committee Meeting
held on Wednesday 12 February 2025 at 3.20pm
via Microsoft Teams**

Present:	Louise Richardson Alison Hewitt James Scott Jill Bottomley Graham Luccock Jonathan O'Brien Lewis Ormston	(Chair) (Vice Chair) (Principal and CEO)
In Attendance:	Rebecca Clare Dave Fitton Carmen Gonzalez-Eslava Naomi Harrop Michelle Leslie Yvonne Riley Lyndsay Sheridan Henry Taylor-Toone Mark Watson Kelly Wright	(Corporation Secretary) (Director of IT and Digital Services) (Deputy Principal) (Director of Human Resources and Performance) (Vice Principal Corporate Services and Planning) (Assistant Corporation Secretary) (Director of Finance) (Chief Finance Officer) (Director of Estates) (Assistant Principal Planning, Funding and Performance)

Minute No:**RES/01/25 Apologies for Absence**

The Corporation Secretary (CS) reported that there were no apologies for absence.

RES/02/25 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of either direct or indirect interest in any of the meeting's business items.

RES/03/25 Minutes of the Resource Committee Meeting held on 14 November 2024

The minutes of the meeting were approved and accepted as a correct account of the proceedings.

RES/04/25 Matters Arising from the Minutes

The Chairperson referred members to the previously circulated summary and progress update concerning the actions arising from the minutes and earlier meetings of the Resources Committee.

It was confirmed that the majority of actions had been completed or would be covered through the business items or were future actions.

The following matters were raised by members:

Minute No:**RES/52/24 Partner Subcontracting (future conversations with Governors on the partnership with Stockport County and the impact on TSCG provision)**

The Principal and Chief Executive Officer (PCEO) commented on current curriculum planning activity which included partnership and subcontracting arrangements for 2025/2026. The PCEO made reference to previous Committee discussions in relation to Stockport County, their ambitious plans to increase student numbers and concerns raised in managing growth. The PCEO advised that the Group were managing expectations reasonably well and were not anticipating a significant increase in student numbers next year.

The PCEO made further reference to the future of the Woodley site, noting the initiated break clause to come into effect in 2026. The PCEO advised that this break was intended to facilitate conversations between Stockport County and Life Leisure in relation to potentially taking control of the site. It was advised that progress in this respect had been slow and the PCEO noted that whilst the Woodley site would no longer be an issue for the Group, the students remain under TSCG's responsibility due to the partnership arrangement with Stockport County.

Action: Principal and Chief Executive Officer

The PCEO undertook to keep the Committee updated on developments between Stockport County and Life Leisure in respect of the Woodley site.

The PCEO reported that the long-standing relationship with Carrington Riding School would end this year. The PCEO advised that the school had decided to initiate a break in the partnership to operate independently. The PCEO noted that whilst this was not a significant financial issue due to the small number of students involved, it marks the conclusion of a good partnership.

RES/53/24 Learner Numbers and Funding Update

In relation to managing the shortfall in budget for 2025/2026 and bridging the gap in FY27 to enable the Group to get back on track in terms of learner numbers, the PCEO made reference to the need to recruit an additional 500 students and commented on the task in terms of curriculum planning, growth and resourcing.

In response to a question, the PCEO discussed the potential impact of the new Cheadle campus on applications, noting that whilst applications for Cheadle have increased, it may not have the same impact as Stockport campus due to different factors driving demand.

RES/57/24 Procurement Plan 2024/2025 and RES/42/24 Procurement Strategy

The Chief Finance Officer (CFO) reported on the work being undertaken with the contractor to embed the procurement plan in preparation for roll out over the next half term. Members recalled that the plan had been delayed due to the late release of the Procurement Act. The CFO advised that the Group were also working to develop a new Procurement Strategy.

Action: Chief Finance Officer

Following due consideration, it was confirmed that an update report in relation to the Procurement Plan 2024/2025 and Procurement Strategy would be presented to the Resources Committee at its next meeting.

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Action: Chief Finance Officer/ Corporation Secretary

It was further confirmed that a Governor training session would be scheduled to update members on the new Procurement legislation.

There were no further issues raised by members arising from the minutes.

RES/05/25

Partner Subcontracting Mid-Year Update

The Assistant Principal Planning, Funding and performance (APPFP) referred members to the previously circulated report and update on the current position in relation to the Group's Partnership and Subcontracting activity during 2024-2025.

The following areas of activity were highlighted:

16-19 Subcontracting

- Carrington Riding School, Debut Academy and Stockport County remain slightly under target. Carrington Riding School arrangement to conclude at the end of the academic year.
- Flixton Girls' School remain on target, with the arrangement concluding at the end of the academic year.
- Learner numbers remain under plan for most programmes (-38), which results in a saving in non-pay expenditure.

16-19 Partnerships

- Altrincham Football Club remain on target.

Adult Skills Fund and Higher Education Subcontracting

- Xyrius Training remains on track to achieve the full year target of £172k income, contributing £30k to the Group. It was noted that the Group were currently considering an extension worth £150k, essential for meeting the high demand for digital skills training. The APPFP reported that Xyrius has a 97% success rate in learner achievement and progression and that the additional funding will address the substantial waiting list and support local skills needs aligned with GMCA priorities. It was noted that a business case was yet to be submitted.
- OLC arrangements continue with all learning to conclude at the end of the academic year as planned.

Adult Partnerships

- Working Wonders remain on target, with an expected contribution to the Group of £414k.
- Code Nation below target by £163k, with an expected contribution to the Group of £113k.

Retention and Achievement

Further information was presented in relation to retention and achievement. It was confirmed that there were no concerns with ongoing monitoring by the Quality department to ensure teaching and learning activities are maintained.

There were no questions or issues raised by members and following consideration it was resolved that the Partner Subcontracting Mid-Year Update be received and noted.

Minute No:**RES/06/25****Learner Numbers and Funding Update February 2025**

The APPFP presented a report which provided a summary update in relation learner numbers and predicted learner funding income.

The APPFP drew the Committee's attention to the following:

ESFA (Education and Skills Funding Agency) Funding for 16 to 19 revenue funding

That 16-19 learner numbers currently stood at 99% of allocation (96% of the curriculum planning target of 5738).

16-19 T Levels

Recruitment in relation to 16-19 T Levels was currently at 236 against an allocation of 335 with a potential clawback of 100k due to under delivery.

The APPFP reported that, currently there is a shortfall of 57 learners in the 16-19 funding stream, but efforts are ongoing to recruit more learners to meet the allocation by the end of the academic year.

It was advised that significant progress has been made in increasing the number of learners in the highest study programme band, which is projected to generate an additional £300k in income.

Adult Skills Fund (ASF) (ESFA and Greater Manchester Combined Authority)

It was reported that the planned target for adult funding starts is 8,926 enrolments, with 6,495 enrolments processed on the system. The expected funding output is approximately 108% of the funding allocation. The APPFP advised that work continues at pace to ensure achievement of the allocation with a review of the course offer in term 2 and term 3 to cover any shortfall.

It was noted that Partnership arrangements for 2024/25 with Code Nation and Working Wonders are in progress with the new Xyrius arrangement recruiting well.

Tailored Learning (previously known as Community Learning)

It was reported that to date there had been 1,425 enrolments recorded against a full year target of 2,277.

Apprenticeships

It was advised that 429 new apprenticeship commencements had been recorded against a target of 437 learners.

Higher Education (HE)

It was advised that HE numbers was below target with 469 HE students enrolled in the system against a planned target of 610 enrolments.

It was highlighted that, excluding the subcontracting arrangement with the OLC, the start target was 353, with actual starts recorded at 230.

The APPFP advised that a thorough review would be taking place for future course offers.

Minute No:**Advanced Learner Loans**

It was advised that Advanced learner loan recruitment is currently above target, 154 enrolled learners compared to a target of 122.

The APPFP reported on a notable success in relation to GMCA Level 3 Skills Fund currently tracking at 180% against allocation of funds, with assumed income significantly above budget. It was confirmed that the Group were awaiting approval from GMCA for the increase.

Questions and comments were invited from members.

- A member asked a question in relation to the impact of the new bill changing apprenticeship requirements, particularly regarding maths and English exit requirements. The APPFP advised that whilst the exact policy details are not yet available, the changes are expected to be positive for recruitment and employer engagement.

In relation to the reduction in apprenticeships from 12 months to 8 months, the APPFP advised that, the focus would remain on ensuring that apprentices receive the right experience and preparation for the workplace. It was noted that the apprenticeship team had been briefed and would focus on employers to remove any potential barriers once the policy details had been released.

The PCEO commented, that it was his understanding, that the shorter apprenticeship durations were planned to be piloted with three or four standards and as these standards were not currently offered by the Group, there would be no immediate impact on the organisation.

In relation to a marketing strategy to promote the changes to apprenticeships the APPFP advised that, once the changes had been confirmed, there would be a marketing push to highlight the new opportunities and the benefits of the revised requirements to employers.

- A member raised a question in relation to the shortfall in HE and the success of the January recruitment drive and it was confirmed that a small number of students had been recruited in January.

Action: Deputy Principal

In relation to the question, as to when governors were likely to receive the review of the HE, the Deputy Principal confirmed that the proposed curriculum offer would be presented to the Higher Education Curriculum & Quality Committee at its next meeting.

The PCEO further advised that the Higher Skills Strategy would be considered at the Governor Strategic Development Day.

The PCEO commented that HE stood at around 2% of the Group's income (excluding OLC) with a contribution rate of 31% and made reference to previous discussions and the need for a strategic shift to either grow the provision and diversify or propose something different.

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- The PCEO drew the Committee's attention to the expected 2% cut in Adult Education funding nationally. It was noted, that in Greater Manchester, there had been verbal assurances that grant providers would be protected.
- The PCEO made reference to the issue with the Level 3 courses for jobs. It was noted that the Group has almost doubled its allocation and was currently awaiting confirmation from GMCA as to whether they will support the increased funding. The PCEO highlighted that this has caused some frustration for students wanting to access the courses which have had to be put on hold until a response has been received.
- In relation to 16-19, PCEO noted the awaited announcement on the increase in the base rate for next year, which the AoC anticipate will be around 3.5%. The PCEO noted high level modelling that had been undertaken and highlighted that the increase could significantly offset the drop in numbers this year, making next year less problematic than initially thought. It was noted, however, that the Group would still need to achieve the target of 500 additional students.

There were no further questions or issues raised from members arising from the report and following due discussion and consideration it was resolved that the Learner Numbers and Funding update report be noted.

RES/07/25

Financial Update and Management Accounts December (P05) 2024/2025

The Chief Finance Officer (CFO) referred members to the previously circulated report and financial position which included the management accounts for the 5 months ending 31 December 2024.

Key issues highlighted included:

P05 Education EBITDA Forecast

- Underlying education EBITDA target was £5.2 million, with an overall target of £3.6 million.
- Positives include £300,000 from income and savings from underdelivered subcontractors.
- Xyrius – £30,000 from income and may be expanded.
- HE is a significant issue with a £500,000 shortfall.
- Non-pay costs are slightly higher due to estates maintenance.
- Pay costs are higher due to National Insurance and lower vacancy factor.
- Underlying £4.6 million

Higher Education

- Shortfall in the recruitment of Higher Education (HE) students, with the current count at 244 against a budget target of 372. It was noted that actions were being taken to mitigate this shortfall.

P5 Risks and Opportunities

- Risk reserve reduced from £1.5 million to £1 million.
- Opportunities include potential National Insurance funding and additional funding for over-delivered Level 3 skills.

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Financial Health and Covenants

- Financial Health moving into Outstanding due to the forecast cash position. However, it was noted that this was based on timing of Cheadle New Build Payments so may go down again.
- Performance and Borrowing both down due to higher revenue decreasing the ratio.
- Significant headroom across all covenants.

Questions and comments were invited from members.

- A member raised a question about the coverage of the National Insurance increase by central government. The CFO advised that the Group were uncertain about the exact percentage until the allocation statement has been received.

The PCEO advised that the Group is expecting additional grant funding as part of the £50 million released by the government to support FE colleges from April to July. This funding is intended to address financial issues and workforce challenges. It was noted that, although the funding is not consolidated, the Group plans to discuss with Unions the potential of a non-consolidated staff bonus. However, it was further noted, that if the National Insurance (NI) funding is not fully covered, the shortfall will be offset using the Group's portion of this £50 million grant.

- A member asked for a comparison of HE numbers with other colleges and the DP confirmed that other colleges across GM were also failing to meet their target numbers for HE.
- A member enquired about the potential for future collaborative work to maintain HE within Greater Manchester.

Confirmation of the ongoing included:

- **Institute of Technology (IoT):** which focuses on technical education and partnerships with employers. It was noted that the Group still needs to go through an approval process to become a member.
- **College Online Partnership:** It was noted that the Group was still in the process of agreeing on a partnership with College Online to deliver higher technical qualifications (HTQs) online. The DP advised that this initiative aims to provide opportunities for working adult learners.

The PCEO confirmed that, whilst the content is delivered online by College Online, the students enrol directly with the Group, and the Group's teachers handle the blended learning using the online content. The PCEO advised that this approach is considered low risk and is similar to the Group's existing partnership with Mindful Education in the adult space.

- **Joint Marketing Campaign:** The PCEO highlighted the work to create a joint marketing campaign with the GM colleges to promote HE and FE collaboratively. This campaign aims to highlight the benefits of HE in FE settings across Greater Manchester.
- A member asked about the factors causing the slowdown in Higher Education recruitment and the DP highlighted contributing factors, including changing learner

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expectations, the attractiveness of degree apprenticeships, and universities' responses to the crisis.

There were no further questions or comments from members and following consideration it was resolved that the Management Accounts for the 5 months ending 31 December 2024 be recommended to the Board of the Corporation for approval.

RES/08/25 Capital Funding update

The CFO referred members to the previously circulated report and capital funding update.

There was confirmation of the position in relation to Office for Students (OfS) and Department of Education (DfE) capital projects within which it was reported that good progress was being made across all grants.

Key points highlighted included:

- **Office for Students (OfS) Capital and Recurrent Grants:** That the Group had successfully bid for £1.75m in 2022, with plans for HTQ delivery and capital resources. In addition, the Group will receive £86k in recurrent OfS Capital.
- **DfE Energy Efficiency Grant:** The remaining spend is for lighting upgrades in Altrincham and Stockport, which are both underway and expected to be completed by the end of March 2025.
- **T-Level Specialist Equipment:** The Creative and Design T-Level is not running in FY24/25, so an extension until December 2025 was requested and granted. The £141,960 deferred relates solely to this T-Level stream.
- **Apprenticeships Growth:** £45,000 allocation for the purchase of Lathing and Milling machines used in the delivery of engineering apprenticeships and contingent on confirming 15 new starts before the end of the year.
- **LSIF:** The LSIF fund was awarded in September 2023 in collaboration with other GM colleges. The planned spend includes construction equipment and CAVE installations at Cheadle and Stockport

The CFO reported on the Stockport CAVE overspend of £54,729 and advised that this is being covered by the Group's self-funded capital contingency.

The CFO reported on a potential Condition Improvement Grant. It was noted that the funds would be allocated over two years. The CFO advised that the specific limitations on the use of these funds were yet to be determined.

There were no questions or issues raised by members and following consideration it was resolved that the Capital Funding update be received and noted.

RES/09/25 Purchasing Report – greater than £50,000

The Director of Finance (DoF) referred members to the previously circulated report and supplementary documentation in relation to purchases over the value of £50,000.

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The DoF advised of the requirement stipulated in the Financial Regulations to update the Committee of purchases in excess of £50,000.

Purchases above the threshold 2023/2024 included:

- 35 suppliers issued 70 invoices greater than £50,000
- 29 Capital invoices/41 Revenue invoices – mainly Subcontractor/partnerships, Cheadle project, Security and Caves

Purchases above the threshold 2024/2025 included:

- Year to Date: 16 suppliers have issued 30 invoices that are greater than £50,000 in value
- 11 Capital invoices/19 Revenue invoices (trend continues in type of spend – subcontractors/ partnerships, Security & Caves)

There were no questions or comments from members and following consideration it was resolved that purchases in excess of £50,000 be received and noted.

RES/10/25**Insurance Claims Update**

The Director of Finance referred members to the previously circulated report and supporting documentation in relation to the current insurance claims lodged against the Group

The DoF advised that during 2024 there had been 10 claims lodged against the Group with 6 claims open and under investigation at the end of January 2025 (2 from 2023 and the remaining 4 from 2024).

It was confirmed that one claim was considered contentious (as described in the MPM handbook) and could potentially breach the £45,000 threshold for prior DfE approval.

The DoF reported that the Director of HR had filed an approval submission and that the Group were currently awaiting the outcome of the case and any potential settlement figure.

A member commented on the increase in insurance premiums due to a rise in claims and noted that with new employment legislation coming in, it was anticipated that premiums would rise further. The member emphasised the need to be mindful as the trend could lead to more claims in the future.

There were no questions or issues raised by members and following consideration it was resolved that the Insurance Claims Update be received and noted.

RES/11/25**Digital Action Plan Progress Update**

The Vice Principal Corporate Services and Planning (VPCSP) referred members to the previously circulated reports and information in respect of progress against the Digital Annual Plan and the development and the Digital Strategy 2025/2030.

The VPCSP reported that, whilst the digital strategy is in development, key actions continue to be developed and implemented with progress monitored by members of the Information Governance Group (IGG).

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It was confirmed that work on developing a new digital strategy has commenced, and that it was anticipated that the strategy would be finalised once the new Chief Technology Officer (CTO) was appointed.

The VPCSP provided a summary of the ongoing progress and outcomes against targets for each strand of the previous strategy as detailed below.

Digital for Students

- Development of digital skills: 72% of returning students reported an improvement in their digital skills during the 23/24 academic year. Returners rated their basic digital skills at an average of 3.8/5, whilst new students rated themselves at 3.5/5.
- Students indicated they were most confident with the following platforms: Word (80%), PowerPoint (78%), Teams (76%).
- Priority areas for further development to enhance skills and confidence include OneDrive (69%), Forms (65%), Excel (31%).
- The introduction of a tutorial to support students with AI literacy. 60% of students stated they had used AI to assist in their learning this year. 69% of students expressed that they understand how AI can and cannot be used in their qualification.
- An expansion of digital skills resources for students with a focus on lower-performing areas identified in the survey and those most frequently needed across subjects.
- Student conference during digital week focussed on the development of students' digital skills.

Digital for TLA

- Expansion of library of basic digital skills resources to take place for remainder of 2024/2025, including 'Two-minute Tuesday' videos on key and emerging technologies and products.
- Cave pilot projects have commenced: ESOL (creating a variety of environments found in the UK with unique vocabulary involved), Early Years (analysis of settings and layouts), Construction (bringing CAD drawings to life in the immersive space).
- AI and Teachermatic continues to be developed and monitored by curriculum teams. The average time saved by Teachermatic user in January is 3.91 hours.

Digital for Staff:

- AI has been central to streamlining processes and reducing the workload for teaching, learning, and support staff.
- Tools like Copilot, TeacherMatic, and Copilot M365 have been introduced to assist individuals. Guidance on safe AI usage follows JISC's guidelines.
- The IT services team is developing AI solutions for the organisation, starting with a pilot in Customer Services and creating a student-facing chatbot.

Universal Enablers – Devices and Platforms:

- Over £200k of Capital has been spent on new devices across the Group including both staff and student PCs and laptops. Focus has been on expanding the Group's Lapsafe provision of loan laptops.

Infrastructure:

- Ongoing and planned infrastructure projects, including IT infrastructure for the new Cheadle building and a new Wi-Fi solution at Marple (subject to the completion of the RAAC project).

Minute No:**Information Governance:**

- The first annual Cyber IT Health Check undertaken, with recommendations feeding into the IT rolling Cyber Action Plan. The TSCG Microsoft Secure Score is 85%, meeting the KPI.
- A recent internal Business Continuity exercise highlighted the need for the ICT infrastructure team to better understand Incident Response processes.

Questions and comments were invited from members.

- A member noted the significant time savings from TeacherMatic and enquired about the rollout of Copilot licenses.

The VPCSP advised that the Group had expanded the number of Copilot licenses slightly compared to last year and that the focus had been on staff whose roles involve tasks like taking minutes, drafting reports, and handling casework.

The Member enquired about the return on investment from staff who have Copilot licenses to judge how beneficial it is in terms of time saving. The VPCSP advised that the IT team were focusing on supporting staff to maximise its benefits and emphasised that whilst some staff are more advanced in using Copilot, others may need additional help to fully leverage its capabilities. The VPCSP confirmed that the Group would continue to seek to expand with Copilot.

- The PCEO commented on the importance of developing a comprehensive digital strategy that includes digital support for employers and enhancing learning outside the college to ensure that students with busy lives can access education outside the traditional classroom setting

The PCEO highlighted some recent initiatives as part of a broader effort to leverage digital advancements to improve educational outcomes and support local businesses, which included:

- Workshops with employers on AI for business and cyber for business, in collaboration with Marketing Stockport. It was noted that the workshops had been successful in engaging many businesses.
- The Student Conference which focused on how students were using digital tools and how the use of digital tools could transform their learning. It was confirmed that a number of governors had attended the event.

Action: Chief Technology Officer

Following due discussion, it was confirmed that the new Digital Strategy would be deferred and presented to governors once the new CTO was in post. It was noted that this would enable the new CTO to contribute their ideas to take the strategy forward.

There were no further questions or comments raised by members and after due discussion and consideration it was resolved that the Digital Action Plan Progress Update be received and noted.

RES/12/25**Any Other Business**

There were no matters raised under any other business.

RES/13/25**Date of Next Meeting**

Minute No:

The Corporation Secretary advised that the next meeting of the Resources Committee would be held on Wednesday 30 April 2025 at 3.00pm via MS Teams

The meeting closed at 4.17pm.